

# Governor lets Navy transfer tainted land, clean up later

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## MILLINGTON

Gov. Don Sundquist Tuesday approved the Navy's request for an early transfer of 1,900 acres to Millington before the military has cleaned contaminated portions of the acreage.

The state's approval — one of the final stages in an ongoing land transfer process between the naval base and the city — means Millington is a step closer to bringing a big industrial park to the neighborhood.

CERCLA, a federal environmental statute, requires that polluted land be clean before it is transferred by a federal body, such as the Navy. But a state may intervene and offer approval for an early transfer before cleanup if the entity that is selling the land shows state officials a detailed plan of how and when the land will be clean, among others things.

"We're satisfied that they will take adequate steps to complete the cleanup and it was in the best interests of the state to allow the early transfer," said Justin Wilson, Tennessee deputy governor for policy.

The city plans to turn roughly 1,350 acres into an office and industrial complex on the north side of the naval base. Navy Road splits the base, with the navy's personnel bureau on the southern half and the transfer property on the north side, which is framed by the Millington Municipal Airport's runway and Illinois Central Gulf Railroad.

The remaining 550 acres are set aside for the airport.

"We have two warm prospects," said Frank Ryburn, ex-

ecutive director of the Millington Industrial Development Board, referring to companies the city is courting for the planned industrial park.

City officials want the transaction completed by mid-December. With the approval, that time frame looks reasonable, officials said.

"We're right on target," Mayor George Harvell said. "The Navy and the state have been working together a long time on the verbiage. But it's good to see it all coming together now."

The governor's approval still holds the Navy responsible for treating the petroleum and lead contamination, which affects roughly a third of the 1,900 acres. But it allows the city to assume control of the land and begin putting it to use before the cleanup is complete.

"The Navy guarantees that it will do anything necessary to clean up the land," said Donald Litton, assistant public works officer at the base.

The approval is the final lap in the land transfer deal that has been dragging for about six years.

The city hit its most recent glitch this summer when it found out that pockets of the property were contaminated with lead.

Most of the contamination has occurred at a subsurface level of 80 feet and doesn't affect the drinking water in the community, Litton said.

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